CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
PAY-AS-YOU-GO ESTIMATE

October 19, 2000

H.R. 2883
Child Citizenship Act of 2000

As cleared by the Congress on October 12, 2000

Enacting this legislation would affect direct spending by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and for a number of other federal programs, but CBO estimates that the act would have no significant net impact on such spending in any year.

H.R. 2883 would grant automatic U.S. citizenship to certain foreign-born children under the age of 18 who become permanent U.S. residents. In order to qualify, one of the child's parents would have to be a citizen. Under current law, such children may choose to become citizens by filing an application with the INS for a certificate of citizenship and paying a $160 fee (the fee is $125 for children adopted overseas).

In fiscal year 1999, CBO estimates that INS collected several million dollars in citizenship fees for foreign-born children and spent roughly the same amount for related administrative costs. Under H.R. 2883, it is not clear how the provision of automatic citizenship would be documented or whether these children would need or desire a certificate of citizenship. CBO expects that fewer children would apply for certificates of citizenship if the legislation is enacted, because certificates would no longer be necessary to obtain citizenship. Thus, we estimate that enacting H.R. 2883 would reduce both fee collections and spending by the INS. The resulting net effect on outlays would be negligible.

Because enacting H.R. 2883 would automatically grant citizenship to certain foreign-born children of U.S. citizens, some of these children could receive benefits from some federal programs for which they would not be eligible as legal permanent residents. CBO estimates that direct spending on benefits for such children would increase by less than $500,000 a year.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Mark Grabowicz. This estimate was approved by Robert A. Sunshine, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.